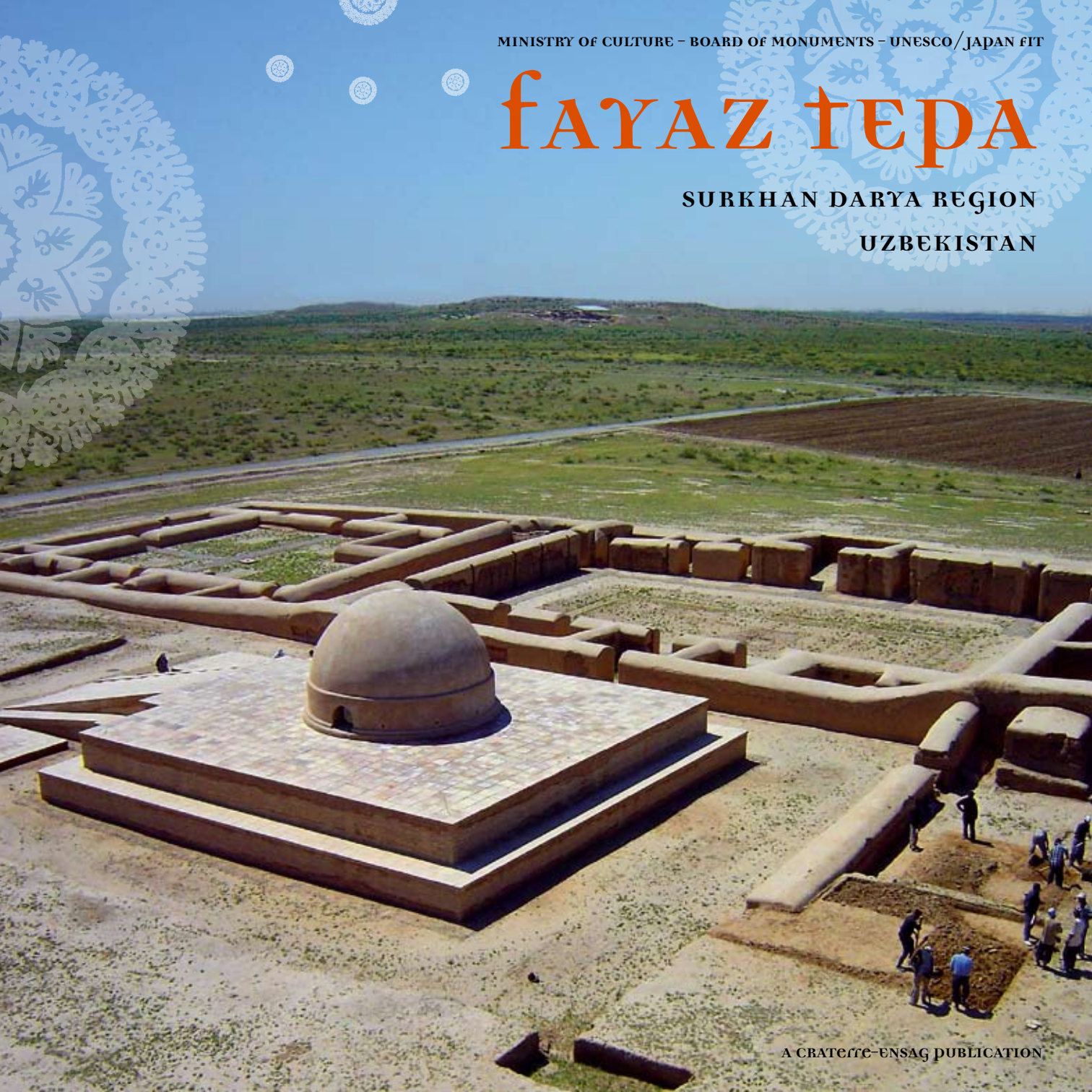
MINISTRY OF CULTURE – BOARD OF MONUMENTS – UNESCO/JAPAN FIT

FAYAZ TEPA

SURKHAN DARYA REGION

UZBEKISTAN



A CRATerre-ENSAG PUBLICATION

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NOVEMBER 2006

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FOREWORD

Located at the crossroads of the ancient Steppe Route and Silk Road, Central Asia possesses a rich cultural heritage, offering a living testimony to thousands of years of history and to the unique contributions of an astounding variety of peoples and cultures. The region's present population is a mosaic of these diverse influences, and its deep-rooted and multifarious cultural identity has been forged, in great measure, by this diversity.

In recent years, UNESCO has undertaken several challenging projects for the preservation of Central Asia's precious cultural heritage, as part of its overriding goal of safeguarding the world's cultural diversity. Our strategy in this domain has been to help re-establish links between present-day populations and their traditions and cultural history, with a view to building a sense of shared responsibility for their common heritage.

A notable example of UNESCO's work in this area has been the conservation of the ruins of the 2,000-year-old Fayaz-Tepa complex at Termez, in southern Uzbekistan. Situated near the banks of the River Amu Darya, close to the Afghan border, this Kushan-period monastery played a determinant role in the transmission of Buddhism from India to China, and is considered one of the principal Buddhist sites in Central Asia. Archaeological excavations carried out here more than thirty years ago revealed many outstanding examples of Graeco-Buddhist sculpture and painting of the Gandhara school. However, over the course of the last three decades, the site's vulnerable earthen structures have gradually deteriorated owing to exposure to the elements.

Generously funded by the Japanese Government, the Fayaz-Tepa project aims, first and foremost, to conserve the ancient earthen structures for the purpose of safeguarding and displaying them. Related activities carried out in the framework of the project include training, documentation and research, the creation of a site museum, and the elaboration of a master plan for the management of the cultural resources of the Termez region. From 2000 to 2006, an interdisciplinary team of international experts, working hand-in-hand with their Uzbek colleagues, have introduced state-of-the-art conservation methods, involving applied research, materials testing and painstaking documentation work. This has resulted in the transfer to the host country of scientific knowledge and modern, up-to-date conservation techniques and practices, which can be employed in future restoration projects in Uzbekistan and the region.

UNESCO will continue to work closely with Member States in Central Asia to ensure that the best international conservation standards are employed for the preservation of the region's cultural treasures, so that future generations may benefit from this unique component of the shared heritage of humanity.

Koïchiro Matsuura
Director-General of UNESCO

INTRODUCTION

Fayaz Tepa is one of the most important archaeological sites of Central Asia and more specifically the Termez area. It bears witness to a key period of the region's history, during which the encounter of Buddhist and Greek cultures took place. The site was discovered in 1968, and was first excavated in the seventies. At that time, some efforts were made to preserve it, but afterwards the site was practically deserted until 2000, when it was reconsidered, on the occasion of the preparation of the celebration of the city's 2 500 years anniversary. At that time, the site, which was in a bad state of conservation, was considered for a potential project under the UNESCO/Japan Funds-in-Trust. This brochure presents the efforts made to preserve this very important site, and the methods and techniques that were used for its conservation, but also gives an idea of the numerous interesting cultural sites present in the Surkhandarya province. The publication of this booklet contributes to the sustainable conservation of Fayaz Tepa, while assisting the Government of Uzbekistan and the Termez Museum in addressing the needs in terms of monitoring and maintenance of the site.

ANCIENT TERMEZ

'triad' group of the Buddha

watercolour
by Al'baum archaeological team

Located in a very strategic location in the alluvial plain at the confluence of the Surkhan Darya and Amu Darya rivers, the initial settlement of Termez is thought to have started in the middle of the first millennium CE., probably after the Achaemenid conquest of the area under Cyrus the Great, when it became part of the ancient Bactrian kingdom, and probably the centre of one of the territorial and political units as well.

The actual foundation of Termez, while difficult to date, is usually considered to have taken place under Alexander the Great or one of his successors; some historians identify Termez as a possible site of one of the Alexandrias.

A small fortress or garrison during the Graeco-Bactrian period (c.250-140 BCE), the settlement gradually developed into a fortified city or citadel, separated from a number of smaller settlements by an artificial moat, which also served as a large canal providing irrigation to the whole area. The city flourished over time and was probably the centre of one of the five Yezhi yagbus which ruled the area after the fall of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom.

In the 6th - 4th cc. BC, the city was part of the ancient Bactrian kingdom, and probably the centre of one of the territorial and political units as well.

On the second half of the 4th c. BC, the major settlements were destroyed ruined during Alexander's conquest, but were revived within what became the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom, during which Termez

flourished. In that regard, the name Termez may come from the Greek Thermo, which means hot, an adjective that suits the city quite well.

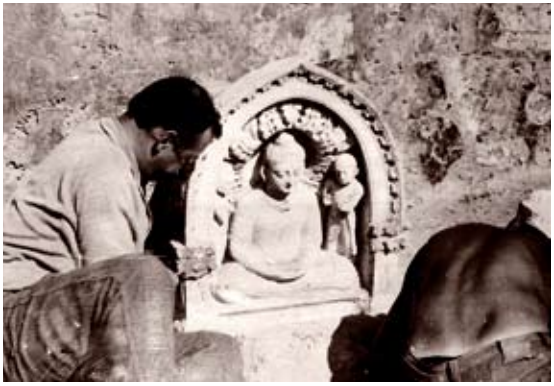
Later, during the Kushan Empire, from on the second half of the first to fourth centuries CE 1st c. A.D. and until the middle of the 3rd c., the city became part of the Kushan Empire. The town rapidly became a great political, economic, religious and intellectual centre, and one of the most important cities in Central Asia.

Its importance is clearly shown by the vast fortifications and buildings of the period, which stretch over 500 kilometers, including many important Buddhist shrines and monasteries including Zurmala, Kara Tepa and became larger and transformed into a major trading and religious center. By that time, Termez was surrounded by numerous Buddhist monasteries and stupas, one of them being Fayaz Tepa, which is the one located at the northwestern end of the territory (oasis) of Termez.

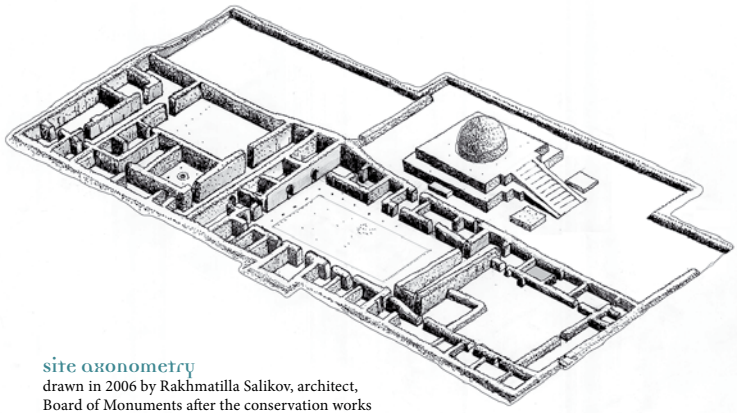
FAYAZ TEPA GENERAL PRESENTATION

I

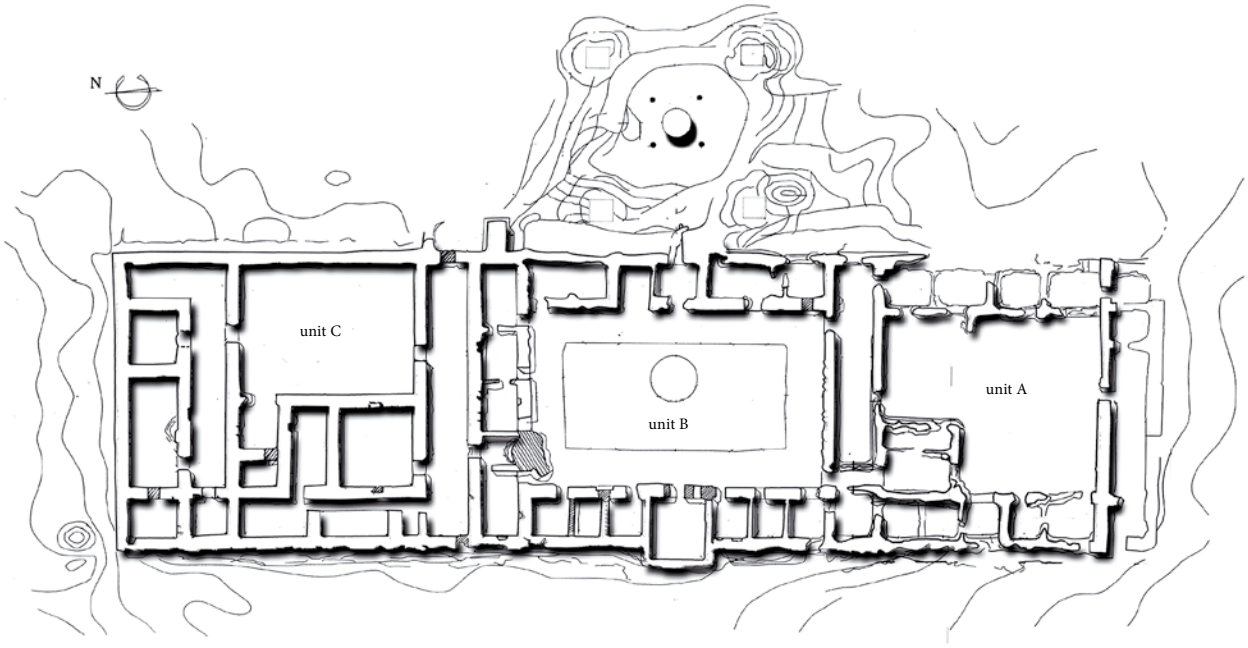
In 1968, a fragment of a statue was discovered by a shepherd, about 3 km north of the citadel of Termez, at a place overlooking the Amu Darya River. The tell was identified as the site of an old settlement, but excavation works only started in 1977, carried out by the Surkhan Darya Section of the Archaeological Expedition of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, under the direction of L. I. Al'baum. The ruins they discovered comprised a large rectangular monastery faced by a stupa, located on the north-eastern part of the site. The complex has three main units: the southern unit (A) containing accommodation for pilgrims including dining rooms and kitchens; the main monastery (B) situated in the centre; and the northern unit (C), probably used for lectures and ceremonies. The central part (B) is built around a courtyard (30x20m), surrounded by a colonnade and a series of rooms. Units A and C also featured a number of internal courtyards and colonnades. The overall building was laid on a gravel layer, avoiding humidity in the Paksha (hand-shaped mud) walls, which were about 1.4 m thick and up to 4.5 m high. Roofs featured barrel vaults made of sun-dried mud bricks (adobe) over the enclosed spaces, and flat roofs supported by wooden beams over the colonnades.



the discovery of the 'triad' group of the Buddha sculpture by Al'baum archaeological team



site axonometry
drawn in 2006 by Rakhmatilla Salikov, architect, Board of Monuments after the conservation works



site plan, 2003

It was also determined that the complex evolved a lot through time, with possible major changes in the use of the various spaces. A peculiar witness of this evolution is the main stupa, which had been transformed from a small, decorated one (3 m diameter and 2,5 m high) to a very large one (7 m diameter and 5 m high). Unit C is thought to be the oldest part, and unit A the most recent.

During the conservation project, archaeological cleaning revealed a compound wall surrounding the large stupa, and an additional courtyard at the north-western end of the complex. The position of the main gate was discovered on the south-eastern side.

Fayaz Tepa was built during the reign of the Kushan Kings (1st to 3rd centuries CE). One of the characteristics of this site is the quality and the good state of conservation of the remains unearthed, the variety and richness of the artifacts and wall paintings discovered, which represent an exceptional testimony of Kushan period art, with clear influences from both Buddhist and Greek cultures.

restitutions of fragments of wall paintings
(above and opposite)

Fayaz Tepa
Art found at the site

The most important discovery at Fayaz Tepa took place in the shrine located in the middle of the south-western part of the central unit (B). Two exceptional sculptures were unearthed by A'baum's team in this room: a standing statue of Buddha with an aureole at the entrance, and the famous 'Triad' group of the Buddha flanked by two disciples, an undisputed masterpiece of Kushan period art in the Gandahara tradition. The left-hand wall was decorated with a monumental painting of the Kushan king flanked by tribute bearers.
Many fragments of gypsum and clay sculptures were scattered on the floor, as well as coins, imitating the coinage of Geliokla, Vima Kadfiza, a nameless king, and Kanishki, Khuvishka and Vasudev.

The complex was supplied with water from the Amu Daria river by 2.5 km long water pipes (the aqueduct embankment is usually defined as the northern wall of the Kushan city), and water pipes were found in one of the buildings.

standing statue of Buddha with an aureole unearthed at the entrance of the room B8

Floors inside the buildings were covered with a thick layer of ganch (a mixture of lime and gypsum) with additions of ash, sand and small-sized pebbles (the durability characteristics of this mixture are close to that of concrete).

In the kitchens, ovens for cooking were well preserved. A number of pottery fragments bearing inscriptions in Kharoshtki, Brakhmi, Baktrian and other "unknown characters" were also found in this area.

In the centre of room C3, a round fire altar was discovered, surrounded by four free-standing columns. Suggestive of a connection with Zoroastrianism, it could possibly be evidence of a synchretism between Buddhist and Zoroastrian religious practices during the Kushan period.

sculptures, terracotta, ceramics, wall paintings found at the site

the stone lion basin discovered on site

THE RESTORATION PROJECT

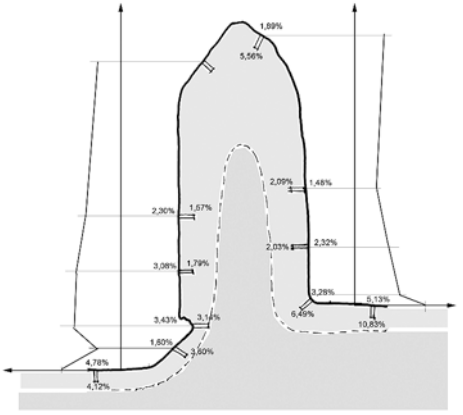
the state of the stuppa before conservation (top)

conservation works

In September 1999, a Japanese Government mission visited Uzbekistan with a view to support the Government in its efforts to preserve the country's cultural heritage. By the end of this mission, it was proposed to undertake a field project at Fayaz Tepa, within the framework of the UNESCO/Japanese-Trust-Fund for the preservation of World Heritage. The purpose was not only to undertake conservation work, but also to explore the possibility to develop tourism in the region and so to contribute to a sustainable socio-economic development of the local community in the Termez region.

The objectives of the project also included: the establishment of partnerships and long-term collaboration at the local, national, regional and international levels; the reinforcement of local skills and capacities for the conservation and management of cultural heritage; and an increase of the awareness and understanding of the archaeological and historical significance of the site.

The project was started in 2002, by UNESCO Tashkent Office, with experts from the Board of Monuments of Uzbekistan as well as with international experts from Japan and CRATerre (Centre de Recherche sur l'Architecture de Terre) France. Besides the conservation, restoration and presentation of the archaeological site, the project comprised the construction of a visitor's centre and the preparation of a master plan for both the conservation of heritage and cultural tourism development in the Termez region.



monitoring damp
Section of wall

peripheral drainage

CONSERVATION PROJECT RESEARCH AND EXPERIMENTATION

If restoration experts in Uzbekistan have quite an extensive experience concerning the conservation of baked brick monuments dating from the medieval to recent periods, very few attempts have been made in the past to preserve the most ancient sites made of mud bricks and earthen materials when, in fact, they appear to be very numerous in Uzbekistan and of very paramount significance. In these conditions it was more than necessary to adopt a methodological approach. So, in addition to conservation/restoration practices, focus was given to the proper understanding of the site, its environment, and the decay processes, in order to achieve a high level of understanding and thus, propose a methodology of intervention with adapted and efficient techniques of treatment. It was also essential to complete the documentation of the ruins, in order to ensure that the remaining archaeological potential would be well exploited, and to enrich the historical and technical knowledge of the site.

Therefore, the project started with a quite long period of documentation, observation and experimentation of possible solutions. The setting-up of a good scientific and technical database would make it possible to define and select appropriate methods and adapted solutions for the proposed restoration-preservation project. There was also a need to adapt to the existing

know-how available in the area. So, in addition to a monitoring programme (climatic, hydrological, geological) that aimed at verifying the hypotheses, various conservation techniques and methods were tested, and left exposed over a significant period of time (from 2003 to 2005) as a means to identify the most efficient ones.

To undertake that, it was decided to experiment on a small scale first, without touching the original fabric of the site. Test walls and stupa were built near the site, to experiment local materials and conservation techniques (surface protection, plasters, capping, protective stupa, drainage systems...).

Some issues were quite difficult to deal with:

- Getting restorers and archaeologists to work together, and at times simultaneously;
- The will to keep the ruin looking like a ruin, meaning that some of the protective assets that the original building probably had could not be reproduced;
- The need to maintain intact the visual relationship of the ruins to their landscape surroundings, which excluded the idea of covering the ruins with a roof;
- The choice to use only natural building materials, like the ones that were available at the time of the construction of the site.

Raw materials used for the conservation works
Geotextile, lime, straw, gravel, sand, soil

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION TRAINING

Fayaz Tepa project has extensively been used for training. While training was first and foremost intended for the local craftsmen who had very little experience in conservation, the site was also used on occasions to train Uzbek experts operating in other regions.

A specificity at Fayaz Tepa was that the training was organised in such a way that everyone could contribute to the training. That means that room was left for everyone with a certain level of expertise to express themselves and contribute to the general reflection, making the project benefit from everyone's experience. For example, this was peculiarly useful when addressing the issue of cob construction which is still mastered today by the local masons. Plastering was also an area in which lot of discussions were held, and various places visited, so as to actually benefit from earlier experiences. The practice of archaeology was also a subject that raised a lot of positive discussions and debates, which led to interesting applications.

Some areas required a more formal training, even though most of the activities were organised directly on the site. This was the case for the construction of vaults and cupolas with mud bricks and without centering, which had been chosen for the construction of the visitors' centre and further re-used for the construction of the large protective stupa, which was built by the trained masons, without difficulties.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION THE MONASTERY

In accordance with international conservation principles, it was decided that the methods to be used would as much as possible be non-intrusive, reversible and make use of the original materials. Another major choice, which was agreed upon right from the beginning of the project, is that the site should keep its ruined aspect. However, to ensure a proper visibility of the site, it was agreed that some walls should be slightly re-elevated. That concerned the pilgrims'/refectory area (unit A) and the compound wall on the northeast side.

Earth is a quite fragile material and soft interventions are required to avoid serious disturbances. In return, this weakness of the material allows the evaluation of the efficiency of conser-

vation techniques within a short time frame (a few years). It was decided that repairs should be minimal, and focused on the reduction of the speed of decay in a "passive" way. The concept to be followed was to undertake works that would ensure that degradation risks and degradation speed would be minimized, without affecting the original structures.

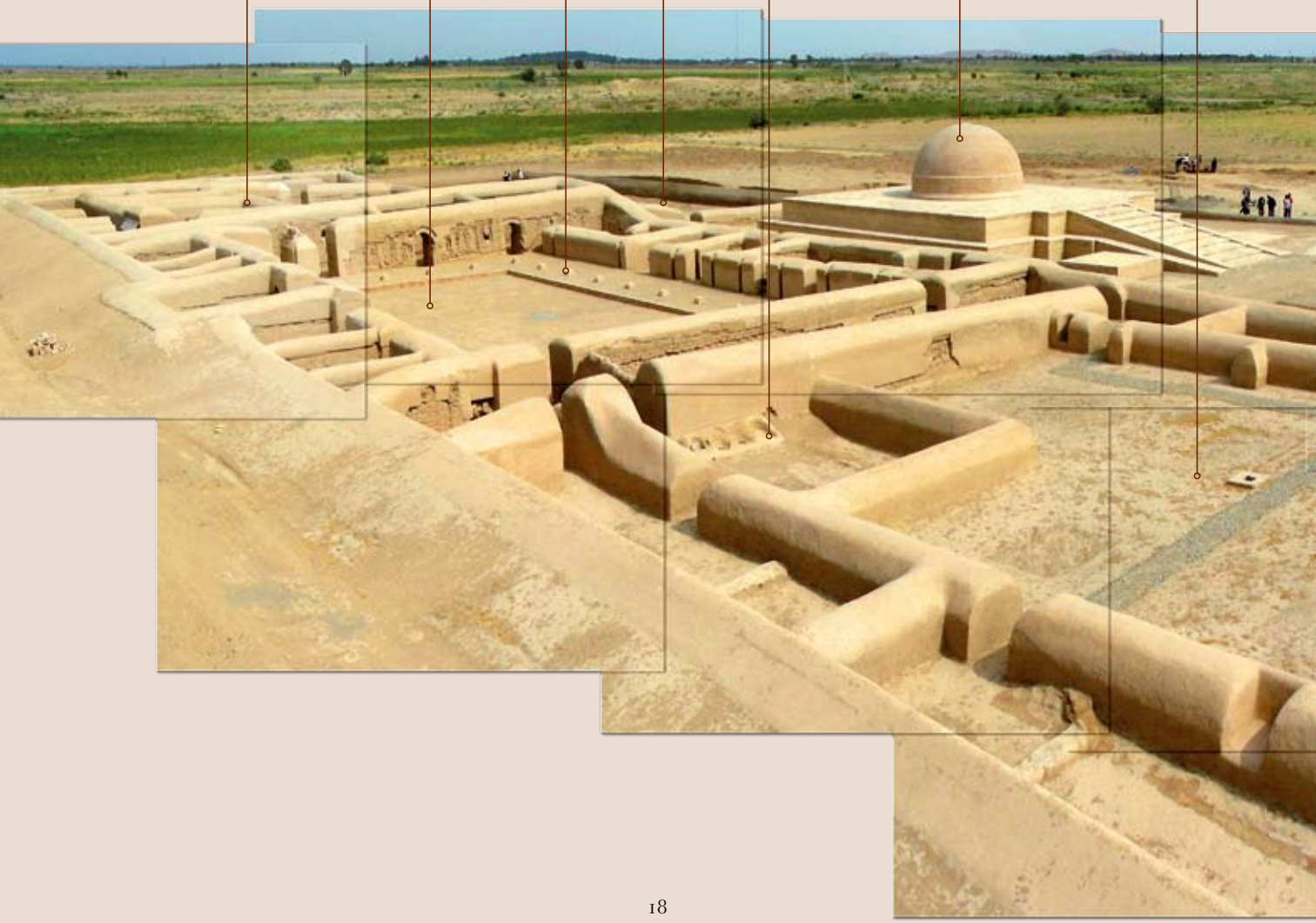
This was concretely achieved mainly through the addition of a rounded protective "chapka" (hat) on the top of the walls, and the implementation of proper drainage systems surrounding the wall bases. Aside from that, the mud bricks used for the restoration works were slightly stabilised with lime. This improvement will avoid risks of degradation even if maintenance cannot be done on a very regular basis.

Finally, it was also agreed that the environment of the site should be maintained in its "wild" state, thus contributing to the overall quality of the visitors' experience. To implement that, the need to fence the site to avoid animal vagrancy and access to motor vehicles was achieved through the digging of a surrounding moat. The farming areas to the north, east and west were reduced and an overall buffer zone was defined. On the southern side, the military zone was displaced.

To improve the visitors' experience, a walkway was proposed with in situ copies of important archaeological installations, and the original findings and layers were properly backfilled. The column bases marking the positions of the colonnades surrounding the central courtyard are replicas based on limestone fragments uncovered on the site during archaeological cleaning.

The entrance to the site was marked with an entrance pavilion. Its aim is to suggest the end of the "profane" zone and the beginning of the "sacred" one, while in the mean time providing a comfortable shaded place where visitors can rest.

north-south section

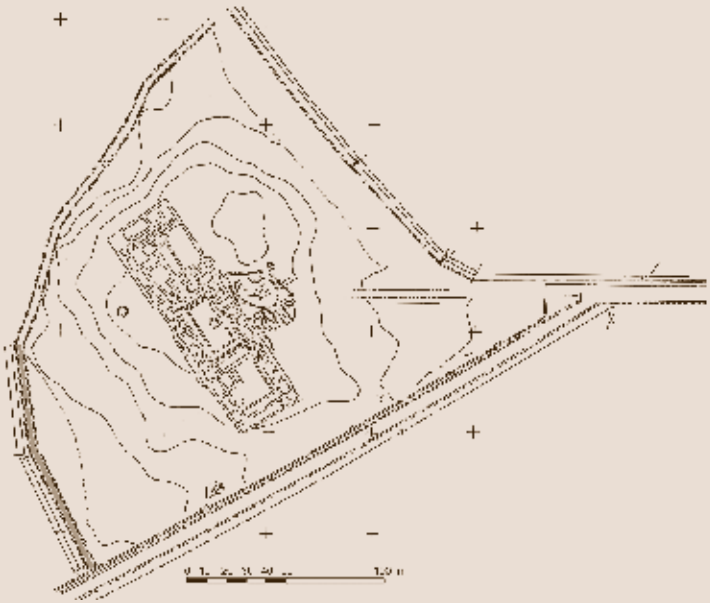


GENERAL VIEW

peripheral drainage

entry pavilon

visitors centre



PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION THE STUPA

C

Conservation options for the stupa were subject to numerous discussions. The stupa is one of the few immovable elements of the site identified as valuable by the team of archaeologists (Al'Baum, in the 1970s). The main issue was the fact that the stupa had been protected by a larger stupa, built at a later stage around it (removed during excavations), thanks to which it had kept its original decorative fabric and patterns. Therefore, after the excavations, it was decided to protect it with a metallic roof; however, the metallic roof provided insufficient protection from the elements, as driving rains and wind-borne sand were still affecting the stupa on its southwest side, effecting significant damage.

Taking all these issues into consideration, and exploring possibilities that could be achieved with local materials and capabilities, it was decided that the best solution would be to cover the remains of the ancient stupa with a protective structure in the form of the original outer stupa as found and removed by Al'baum. Built as a protective dome with an accessible window, this solution enables one not only to see the original stupa, but also to go around it and monitor the state of conservation of this very valuable asset of the site. Another fact about the stupa

west-east section

is that its platform was often used as an interesting point for getting a general overview of the site. If reconstructed, larger groups would then be able to reach it. For all these reasons, it was agreed that a consistent project for the stupa should include both the restoration of the platform and the construction of a cupola above the stupa.

The stupa base as well as the protective cupola have been designed according to the findings of the excavation works, keeping the dimensions of the large stupa, as discovered (and then removed) during the archaeological excavations carried out by Al'baum. It now gives a good impression of how the stupa was, during the later periods of occupation of the site.

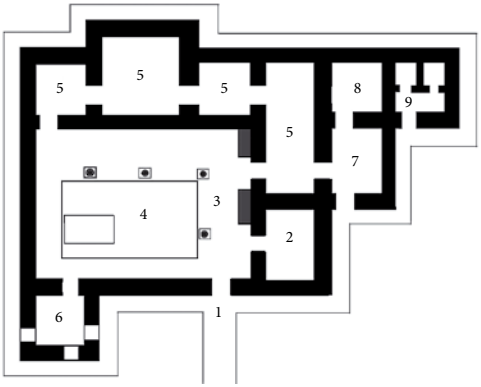
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION THE VISITORS CENTRE

To make the visit of the site more enjoyable, and to improve the understanding of the site, a visitors' centre was built close to the archaeological site. It features a small museum, a documentation centre and a permanent guard/guide.

To reinforce its educational purpose, the new building was designed and inspired by the architecture of the ruins. It is also based on what is currently known about the techniques and building methods used for the construction of Fayaz Tepa monastery and other sites of the Kushan period in the Termez area.

Aside from some of the baked bricks, which were specially fabricated in Shakrisabz, and the modern equipments (electricity, plumbing), the new building was entirely made with locally available materials. As in Fayaz Tepa, the walls of this new building are made of Paksha and mud bricks and the roofs are a combination of cupolas and vaults. The courtyard, featuring a "sacred pool" (basin) and a "sacred tree", is surrounded by a colonnade and covered with a flat terrace over the Iwan.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION THE VISITORS CENTRE



plan of the centre
1 entrance
2 bar
3 iwan
4 courtyard
5 exhibition rooms
6 guard room
7 stuff room
8 laboratory
9 lavatory

Almost all aspects of construction of the visitors' centre are based on observations and on artefacts found on the archaeological site and at similar sites of the period. The design of the central dome with its pendentives and the niches is based on the remains of Kushan period constructions at Kara Tepa. The fragments of column bases found on site were used as models for those positioned around the courtyard.

After its construction, the building was equipped with reproductions of the stone lion basin found on site and of the earthen fireplaces uncovered in the refectory area. There are also a number of copies of the most important sculptures and wall paintings, which are displayed in places similar to those where they were found at the site itself.

The visitors' centre therefore gives a pretty good idea of how buildings of Ancient Termez would have looked during the Kushan period.

OTHER SITE OF INTEREST SURKHANDARYA REGION

Surkhandarya is located in a rather picturesque environment and it has numerous monuments and ruins of ancient settlements, witnessing its long history.

The oldest sites discovered in the region date back to the middle of the Paleolithic era (100-40 millennia BCE), but evidence of intense human activity appears to start only during the Bronze Age, by the beginning of the 2nd millennium B.C.

Benefiting from the natural routes that are both the Amoudaria and the Surkhandaria rivers, the region became, probably rather quickly, a major trading centre. However, it seems to have been as a consequence of the mastery of irrigation that the settlements developed and became large fortified cities. That occurred during the Achaemenid period (6th - 4th cc. BCE) and further during the Graeco-Bactrian period (c.250-140 BCE), with probably major developments during the Kushan period from the first to fourth centuries CE.

BOYSUN CRAFT CENTRE

During the early medieval period (fifth to eighth centuries CE) the region was part of the large historical region of Tokharistan. Since that time, the city of Termez has been often mentioned in various sources. The settlements differed, featuring a more precise planning and larger sizes, of up to 5-6 hectares.

The Arab conquest of Tukharistan by the general Qutaiba ibn Muslim in 710 CE laid the foundation of a new era. New construction technologies emerged, such as the use of baked bricks and glazed ceramics. Their use started to be generalized in construction, mixed with paksha and adobe bricks. Islam influenced the introduction of new urban planning and architectural styles in the region.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were marked by a growing influence of Russian architecture and town planning. Modern Termez city was conceived at that time. But it is during the Soviet period (1917-1991) that the city evolved into what can still be seen today, even though a number of recent achievements can be seen as signs of the emergence of a new era, visibly influenced by globalization.

Apart from these elements, the region also possesses interesting and varied traditional architectures and cultural landscapes that result from the rich history of the area and the capability of its inhabitants to create specific responses to their needs, making the best use of what their mountainous environment and its two important rivers had to offer.

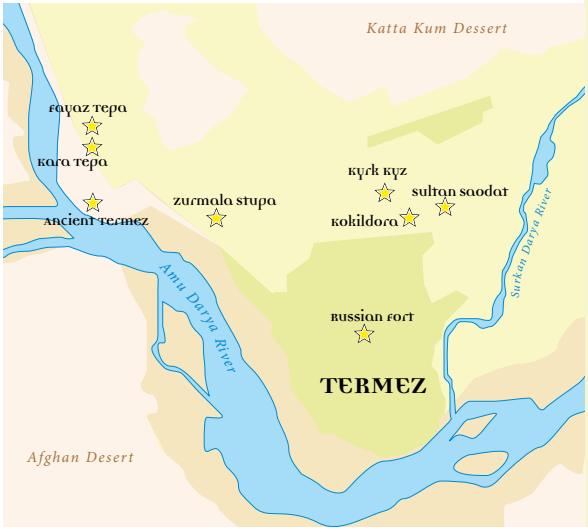
Overall, a visit to Surkandarya can be a very informative and rich experience, thanks to the numerous local specificities that do not exist in other regions of Uzbekistan, and is a good complement to the usual visits which are often limited to Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva, and that do not suffice to provide a good overall understanding of the country and its long history.

OLD TERMEZ

I

It is during the Achaemenid and Greek periods that writings, which have passed the test of time, describe the area, its people and moreover the name of the city: Termez. The city was conquered by Alexander the Great and it is almost a certain fact that Alexander's wife, Roxanne, came from the Surkhandarya province. According to some experts, Termez is probably the site of the Alexandereia Oxeiane, the capital city of the Greco-Bactrian Empire, which, most interestingly, kept its Greek character despite the fact that it became totally separated from the Mediterranean world by the Parthian empire.

Afterwards, the city of Termez seems to have been occupied by the Yuezhi and the Sakas who were rather nomadic people. So, the major sites of Ancient Termez, which can be seen today, mostly date back from later periods: the Kushan and the Kushano-Sassanian periods. It is during those periods that the city acquired its high importance. The city stretched out over hundreds of hectares and an impressing series of vast



Amou Daria

Kempir Tepa

Kara Tepa

Buddhist monasteries were built. Along with the development of the city, a number of new canals were built throughout the province and towns, fortresses and other sites developed over the irrigable plains.
Although Termez was never the capital of the Kushan empire, its size makes it one of the major centres of the region, and its location, on the northern edge of the Empire, meant that it presumably played an important role in relation with the neighbouring regions, as well as in the development of long-distance trade along the Silk Road.
Aside from Fayaz Tepa, the most impressive monuments so far discovered in the region are without a doubt the great Buddhist monasteries, Kara Tepa and the stupa of Zurmala, all witnessing the huge expansion of Buddhism during this period.
The monuments and objects uncovered over the past 80 years provide a stunning image of the city during this period. They include sculptures, wall paintings, well-preserved buildings, texts in various languages and much more.

zurmala stupa

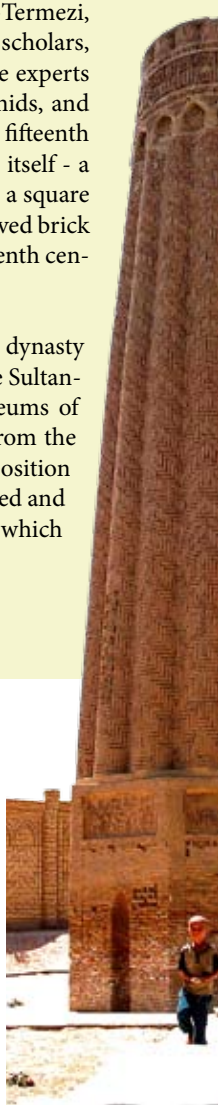
kara tepa (general view of the site)

MONUMENTS OF THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

Situated near the entrance of the ancient citadel, the mausoleum of the sufi sheikh al-Hakim al-Termezi, one of the greatest of the Central Asian hadith scholars, is a major pilgimage site. Founded according to some experts in the ninth century under the dynasty of the Samanids, and gradually enlarged over a period of time until the fifteenth century, the building is composed of the mausoleum itself - a small domed building – with a three-domed mosque, a square courtyard and a large, domed khanaka. It contains carved brick inscriptions dating from the Karakhanid period (eleventh century) and a Timurid period senotaph.

Illustrating the period when the Karakhanid-Seljuk dynasty ruled what was called the Northern Tokharistan is the Sultan-Saodat complex, an important ensemble of mausoleums of the Termez seyids, who claimed their descendance from the prophet Muhammad. The central element of the composition is a pair of domed mausoleums united by a deep vaulted and tiled Iwan added in fourteenth to fifteenth century which served as a Mosque.

sultan saodat complex



kokildora

kokildora

zul qefil

A particularly fine example of Karakhanid sculptured brick architecture is the splendid early twelfth century Djarkurgan minaret, situated close to the main road from Termez towards Denau and Dushanbe.

One of the most impressive medieval monuments from the post-Mongol period is Kirk-Kiz. Located outside the walls of medieval Termez, it was probably the fortified residence of a noble family. Its design is archaic, with its square plan, large central courtyard, round towers in the corners and almost blind external facades. Although it was thought for a long time to date from the reign of the Samanids (ninth and tenth centuries CE), of which it shares many of the characteristic architectural features, more recent archaeological research has demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that the site should be dated to the fourteenth to fifteenth century.

The Kokildora khanaka was constructed in the sixteenth century during the ruling of the Sheibanid dynasty. The plan is quite original with a variety of decorative vault and dome systems.

Compared to other monuments of the same period in Bukhara, Samarkand or Balkh, the monuments found in the Surkhandarya region feature less or no glazed tile decoration, but carved brickwork instead. Therefore, the style is more defined by the significance of forms and proportions and the originality and clarity of the structural design.

kirk kiz

Jarkurgan minaret

al hakim al termizi

kirk kiz

kirk kiz

RECENT MONUMENTS COLONIAL PERIOD

The colonial Period in Termez started in 1894 with the cession of the site of Patta Hissar to the Russian army, for the construction of the fort, which is still standing today in the centre of the city. It is a huge structure built with pakhsa and baked bricks.

The colonial period is important from a cultural and historical perspective because it is by that time that a great portion the modern Termez was born. A number of buildings from the period are still standing, such as the Alexander Nevsky Church, dating from 1896.

Because the region of Termez was inhabited largely by semi nomadic groups up until the foundation of the fort of Termez by the Russian army, there is little traditional Central Asian architecture in or around the city. The farm-like houses built along the roadsides show an interesting mix of ancient local traditions and new ideas brought by the Russians. The urban plan, the sizes of the houses, and their specific layout comprising individual gardens and front metallic verandas covered with grapes in the summer, provide a very peaceful impression and also a sense of respect and equity.

the Alexander Nevsky church

termez fort

colonial architecture

Termez Archaeological Museum

A TOUR IN SOUTHERN UZBEKISTAN !

Make your visit to Uzbekistan complete with a journey to Termez. While it is possible to reach Termez by plane, one of the best ways to come down there is by car, from Samarkand.

On the way you will first pass though a mountainous zone and arrive at Shahrisabz, the green city, home town of Amir Timur, where you will be able to climb on top of the ruins of Ak Sarai, his summer (white) palace, one of the most impressive historic buildings in Uzbekistan. There are also several other very interesting monuments of the Timurid period. You should also visit the historic core of the city with its simple houses, featuring delicately decorated interiors.

From Shahrisabz to Termez, the road will drive you through scenic landscapes and you will be able to visit several very interesting places one being the dinosaur footprints at …???., the other being Boysun, which stands in the centre of "The Cultural Space of Boysun District" a site classified, in 2001, as

shakhrisabz

boysun, landscape, architecture and traditional culture

a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. If you do not have the chance to be present during the annual festival, you should still stop there and pay a visit to the Craft Centre. Built with technical and financial assistance of UNESCO, with the purpose of reviving the endangered traditional crafts knowhow. The building is a masterpiece of traditional architecture, entirely built by local masons, using traditional techniques and materials. The production of the Centre, including authentic hand-woven natural dyed janda and bekasam textiles, okenli gilim, gadjari and Terme rugs and suzani embroideries has already won the UNESCO SEAL of Excellence for quality crafts. In addition, the Centre houses the Museum of Boysun Applied Arts and Crafts.

shakhi zinda, samarkand

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